

Glen Springs Hotel

Watkins, Glen, New York

by

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The Glen Springs opened in 1890. It succeeded the Lake View House which had closed 12 years earlier following the death of its owner, George G. Freer, a prominent lawyer and landowner. William E. Leffingwell bought the property and established his health resort there, 300 feet above present Watkins Glen. Four large mineral water springs on the grounds were developed to attract sojourners. The different springs have been compared to those at Baden, Nauheim, Vichy, and Saratoga. People came from Europe and all over the United States to relax and to receive treatment at Glen Springs. A medical staff gave advice, massages and baths for patients suffering from gout, rheumatism, and digestive problems. Residents paid \$25 to \$35 a week to stay at the resort in 1900.

The hotel had its own swimming pool and solarium, even an elevator. Public rooms were on the main floor: several parlors, a music room, a fern room, card and writing rooms, a dancing parlor, reading room and library, lobby, offices, even a smoking room and a billiard room for men. Additions were made to the central building several times until there were 196 sleeping apartments, some with private marble bathrooms. By 1919 all of the rooms were equipped with long-distance telephones. There was a 300-foot-long veranda and a roof garden with a twenty-mile view up Seneca Lake.

Paths wound through the 60 acres of grounds to the different covered springs, to cottages and to tennis courts, a croquet lawn, and a golf course. The hotel had a large dining room, a kitchen, even a dairy, a laundry, and living accommodations for its staff of about 100 people. Wells on the property yielded natural gas to heat the buildings and hot water, and to fuel an electric plant.

When World War II erupted clientele no longer came to Glen Springs and it closed in 1942. The building housed married students attending Cornell and other colleges from 1946 through 1948. In 1949 the Franciscan Friars opened St. Anthony's of Padua Preparatory School, but closed it in 1970. Next, the Glen Springs Academy, a private boarding school, ran for four years until 1974. Finally in the early months of 1996 the buildings were demolished.

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